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MANUAL OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE

AND

CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

MANUAL

OF

SELF-KNOWLEDGE

AND

CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

COMPILED FROM VARIOUS SOURCES BY

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NEW YORK CINCINNATI CHICAGO

BENZIGER BROTHERS

PRINTERS TO THE HOLY APOSTOLIC SEE | PUBLISHERS OF BENZIGER'S MAGAZINE

1913

BX 2350
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✠ JOHN CARDINAL FARLEY
Archbishop of New York

NEW YORK, January 31, 1913

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PREFACE

KIND READER, here you have a small manual. The subjects contained in the first part were treated in various conferences to married men as well as in retreats to religious communities. In every instance they were received very favorably. This eventually suggested the idea that they might prove useful to a larger circle. With this view they were arranged for publication. It is hoped that in the present form they may prove useful to parents, instructors of youth, those charged with the care of the sick and invalids, and

even for the private use of all, especially those that experience a vocation to the religious or ecclesiastical state. May Our Lord and His blessed Mother bestow a blessing on all that read this manual and on

THE COMPILER.

Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes,
February 11, 1913.

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INTRODUCTION

"*DOMINE noverim Te noverim me ut diligam Te et oderim me.*" O Lord, let me know Thee; let me know myself, that I may love Thee and detest myself." This petition of St. Augustine is the leading idea of this manual viz: Self-knowledge and the love of God. It does not pretend to be anything new. It is a compilation of what is found treated by different authors. The matter, therefore, is not new. "Nothing under the sun is new," says the Wise Man (Eccles. i. 10). It is always best to repeat old truths in another and attractive form.

The eminent Jesuit, Father P. Judde, says no science is so necessary to man as self-knowledge. No one will deny that self-knowledge is valuable. By this means man learns to know his evil inclinations. This science teaches him which inclinations he must foster. Self-knowledge discloses to man what he has acquired, as well as what is yet to be attained, in the fulfilment of his duties and obligations. It must be evident to every one that self-knowledge is a great aid to man in all his undertakings. For is it not encouraging to know our capabilities? Self-knowledge is equally valuable in guarding against our shortcomings.

If self-knowledge is valuable in general, it is necessary in the spiritual life. Everything that relates to the soul is of paramount importance.

We know the soul is created by God and for God. Is it not a necessity to know we are walking the way of the Lord? Again, how will we be able to recognize that we are walking the way of the Lord, except by self-knowledge? Certainly, a thorough self-knowledge is here demanded. For, in order to walk the way of the Lord securely, as Father Judde adds, a spiritual director is required. Our Lord Himself tells us no one can be his own safe director. He says it would be a blind man leading the blind and both would fall into a pit. To this spiritual guide we must manifest our interior. Now, this cannot be done unless we know the interior of our souls. That a spiritual guide is needed all spiritual writers concede. It is the only means to become secure.

Celebrated philosophers arrived at

this truth (namely, the necessity of self-knowledge) by the light of reason alone. *"Nosce teipsum"* was the oft-inculcated injunction of the ancients. As an example, Rev. G. Diessel, C.SS.R., cites Pythagoras, who died in the year 507 before Christ. This great philosopher had numerous disciples. He demanded that his disciples in all tranquillity should twice a day propound to themselves these questions: What did you do this day? How did you do it? What have you omitted to do?

In a word, all spiritual writers are agreed on the necessity of self-knowledge. Why do they, one and all, insist on a daily and serious self-examination? It is because a daily and serious examination will produce true self-knowledge. True self-knowledge gives us a clear under-

standing of our wretchedness and helplessness. It imparts to us the conviction that of ourselves we are but misery and sin. It also gives us a clear knowledge of the emotions and passions that principally influence our actions. This knowledge will enable us to lay aside our faults. Surely we must be acquainted with the faults and failings to which we are prone if we wish to know what is reprehensible in our conduct.

More than this: True self-knowledge is one-half of the way on the road to perfection. The better we know our shortcomings the more we will feel incited to be freed from them. The greater the exertion of man on this point, the greater his progress. This caused the author of the Imitation to say that one's progress is commensurate with the vio-

lence one does to himself. By removing all obstacles, true self-knowledge opens the way to union with God by charity.

With the view of facilitating self-knowledge, the character traits, both favorable and unfavorable, of the different temperaments are treated in the first part of this little manual. Yet only the psychical traits of the temperaments will be treated. In other words, mention is made of the manner the human soul is influenced by temperament. Nothing will be said as to whether these temperaments proceed from a lymphatic or nervous or pulmonary or other system. This eliminates the physical traits of temperament. This part is left to scientists. It was also thought sufficient to treat of four temperaments only: viz., the phlegmatic, mel-

ancholic, sanguinic and choleric. It is possible to group the main character traits under these four divisions. It is unnecessary to discuss whether this division of temperament is correct. Some authors prefer a different classification of temperaments. Their division of temperament is certainly interesting. But the above is the most accepted one. It is also the oldest. On this account it was deemed sufficient for the purpose of this manual.

In this connection Pastoral Theology has not been overlooked. After the unfavorable and favorable traits of temperament have been given, the assistance of Pastoral Theology is added. To every temperament is added the method of direction proper to the temperament. This is done with a view of benefitting a greater

number of readers. Confessors have ample guides in Pastoral Theology. Not so with others. This manual may be of assistance to others, besides candidates for the priesthood and the religious life. There are many engaged in the education of youth. These constantly meet diverse and opposing dispositions in various pupils. This part may enable them to be of greater assistance to their pupils. Then, too, parents ofttimes perceive different dispositions among their children. True it is, they are members of the same family. But oh! the difference of likes and dislikes in the various members of the same family. This part of the treatise may possibly furnish parents valuable aid. The same benefit may accrue to those in charge of the sick and invalids. Who is there that does not know how difficult

is the proper care of the sick and invalids!

The second part of the manual treats of Christian perfection. The first part has opened the way. Self-knowledge is the beacon light. It directs the soul to the great truth that all its happiness consists in union with God by charity. "Restless is the heart of man until it rests in God" says St. Augustine. This part of the manual briefly indicates in what Christian perfection consists and the principal means to be employed to secure it. Part two is taken from the ascetical books of St. Alphonsus. Some chapters were translated from the second revised edition of *"Schule der Christlichen Vollkommenheit"* by Rev. Andrew Hellbach, C.SS.R. Other chapters were simply compiled from "The True Spouse of Christ,"

by St. Alphonsus himself. It is not possible to find a safer and more zealous guide. Those who desire longer treatises on Christian perfection and the means thereto can easily consult the writings of this great saint. Where additions were taken from the writings of other writers the reader will always find that special mention is made. May this little manual now go forth with the blessing of Our Lord and His holy Mother.

ON TEMPERAMENTS IN GENERAL

ALEXANDER E. SANFORD, M. D., in "Pastoral Medicine," says on page 266: "Within the last few decades the nervous diseases in their thousandfold shapes have increased to an alarming extent." And again on page 316: "Many a time it will become evident that the manifest inappetency for work, the reduced capability, the mental palsy, plain to all, the striking absence of mind, the inattention and apathy at school, bashful and reserved ways, that slight inclination to gloominess, that wavering of the whole demeanor, that all

these are not character traits, but a consequence of the conflict, the defensive struggle, which the poor tortured has to wage with the torturing process within." Rev. Joseph Antonelli, Doctor and Professor, remarks that nervousness at the present day is so prevalent that scarcely one among a thousand is normal.

Nevertheless, not all is disease. There are temperaments, as the majority of authors admit. It is necessary to distinguish in each individual case between character traits and neurasthenia. The different dispositions and propensities in the human body naturally influence the affections of the soul. This influence impresses a constant type or stamp on his actions. This is called temperament. All around us we see nature furnishing materials. Many are imperfect,

possibly almost useless. Art must intervene. Labor must render perfect. The same is true of temperament. Every one should endeavor to perfect the temperament given by God. Man must hew away what is rough. Man must reform what is amiss. Man must perfect what is good. Then all will redound to the great profit of the soul and will be of real service to others.

Rothenflue remarks that the temperaments are always intermingled, yet, so that one generally predominates. Thus, no temperament stands alone. The predominant temperament is intermixed with the character traits of one or more of the other temperaments. Besides the natural dispositions of a man, his temperament may also be greatly influenced by climate, surroundings, education

and advancing years. In fact, it may change in the progress of time. Then, too, as Rothenflue further remarks, one temperament possesses more happy traits than another. He says the most happy temperament is that one in which none predominates, where one counterbalances the other. Such a one is, as it were, born for a virtuous life. Yet, he and all philosophers maintain, no matter how unhappy one's temperament, man can, with a determined will, correct and modify it. Ascetical writers tell us this can be done better still by means of a good will united to the grace of God. God certainly grants his grace to all of good will. St. Augustine tells us it is our duty to correspond to the grace that God offers. God will enable us to attain our end, namely, union with Him by charity. The mis-

fortune is, so few are willing to make the proper effort. Thus, they become useless both to themselves and others. Let every one then endeavor to obtain true self-knowledge in order to attain to the union with God by charity.

No one need be discouraged. Every one should set to work with a determined will. A good will in union with the grace of God will accomplish everything. Next, every one should also be content with the temperament God has given him. No matter how unhappy the temperament, every one can attain, not only salvation, but also Christian perfection. As soon as man has obtained true self-knowledge, he has accomplished one-half of the task. Then, it remains for him to put into operation the means to obtain the love of

God. It would, however, be a great error to imagine that this can be accomplished at once. On the contrary, this is a task, a labor that will occupy him the balance of his days. Some resemble a certain class of sick people. When an infirmity seizes them, they readily take a few doses of medicine. Then they find they are not cured. In their impatience they blame the physician with a want of knowledge and insist there is no virtue in the medicine prescribed. Let no one imagine he can attain perfection at once. How many years does not the student employ in hard study, oftentimes fraught with poverty and privation, before he can become a lawyer, physician or architect!

What wonder then that we discover numberless defects when we proceed to obtain self-knowledge. In

the spiritual life, also, years of toil, exertion and disappointments are to be met. In connection herewith one instance from the lives of the Fathers of the Desert may be cited. St. Isidore, one of the disciples of St. Anthony, is the one selected. Some time after he had been elevated to the priestly dignity, he became Superior of the Religious of the Desert of Scete. This saint had a special talent from God to heal the maladies of the soul. Whenever other Superiors were in favor of dismissing any of their subjects on account of negligence, slothfulness, impatience, passion or other defects, he desired that they be brought to him. By treating them with his usual charity, humility and patience, he generally brought them to a right sense of their duty and in time cured them effectually of

all their vices and faults. This is a universal experience. No one can flatter himself that he is perfect in the beginning of his career. Some lose courage and because of cowardice give up the combat little by little, as did some disciples of St. Isidore. Again, it will require a long struggle, this fight against sins, faults, and imperfections. Only those conquer that persevere resolutely, for, even St. Isidore could not accomplish everything at once. In some instances he could accomplish nothing. The incident also goes to show that assistance of the spiritual director renders the one directed not only secure, but is at the same time most valuable, because encouraging. More than this, it is the only means to obtain certainty that we are on the road to perfection.

Lastly, should it appear surprising that so much is said on temperaments, the following may serve as answer. Rev. P. Vercruysse, S.J., says: "To gain our souls the Good Shepherd accommodates Himself to our inclinations, frailties and humors. . . . Examine your past! Possibly you will discover many instances of the Divine Goodness and Meekness accommodating Itself to your character, temperament, desires and inclinations." (Meditation for the Thursday after the third Sunday after Easter). If Our Lord takes into consideration our temperament, etc., it will not be amiss on our part to act similarly.

THE PHLEGMATIC TEMPERAMENT

WE WILL begin with the disadvantageous traits of this temperament. The characteristics of this temperament are sloth and indifference. Both sloth and indifference are unfortunate traits. Sloth prevents the phlegmatic from making efforts. He is averse to exertion. His indifference renders this still more difficult. His disposition greatly inclines him to sweet idleness: *Dolce far niente.* But, is there nothing that is attractive to the phlegmatic? There is. He is fond of good cheer. He loves the pleasures of a good table as much as he detests

labor. If these sensual pleasures are beyond his means, his thoughts will invariably revert to them. These fancies of the imagination have great attraction for him. There is something more that fascinates him. He has a strong leaning to mechanical pursuits. Mechanical occupations charm him. He finds them congenial. He loves to tinker. Here he manifests a great endurance. But they must not disturb his equanimity. They must not rob him of his evenness of mind. It is consequently very natural that he detests all labor of a higher order. The very inclination to mechanical labors is the reason that he is not suited to applying diligently to science and learning. He greatly dislikes all effort in this direction. His indifference is opposed to arduous application to earnest study.

The very same holds good in regard to the practises of the spiritual life. It is not in him to apply with energy and diligence to the practises of virtue. An efficacious pursuit of Christian perfection is very much against his grain. He is too slothful. He is too indifferent. You cannot inspire him with enthusiasm for religious practises. He feels little inclination for acts of virtue. The reason is that naturally he exhibits as little acuteness, as he possesses little imagination and energy. It appears impossible to arouse him to enthusiasm. He may, perchance, exhibit good judgment and more intellect. Yet these, too, are dull, spiritless and indifferent. In this connection the celebrated Benedictine, Father Schram, remarks that persons that were choleric in their youth may become phlegmatic

in advancing years. They will especially be noted, for prudence. This results from their experience in the previous conduct of affairs. Finally it is necessary to point out a grave danger to which this temperament inclines. This is effeminacy. This inclination draws man violently to the gratification of sensual pleasures. Silent waters flow deep. Naturally quiet and taciturn, the phlegmatic may easily yield to this inclination. This is exceedingly dangerous. Should the phlegmatic yield in this respect, it may develop into an incurable passion.

Now we turn to the favorable traits of this character. One great advantage of this temperament is that the phlegmatic is gentle by nature. This is a most estimable disposition. He is greatly inclined to be patient

and peaceable. Certainly most amiable qualities. They prevent strife and quarrels. He is averse to clamor and noise. Another good trait is, he is easy to govern. On this account he will cause little trouble to those that are charged with directing his conduct. Furthermore, he is undisturbed by good as well as adverse events. He will not easily lose his equanimity. His calm temper prevents him from being elated with excessive joy in prosperous events. If, on the contrary, he meets with adverse fortune, he is not unduly depressed. Thus he is consequent and constant in all his undertakings. Another good characteristic of the phlegmatic is, he is tenacious of tradition. Novelties have no attraction for him. It is easy for him to follow the prescribed rules. Every one will quickly understand

how beneficial this disposition is, both for himself and his associates. In consequence he invariably exhibits punctuality. This is natural. For he is disposed to be conscientious. He is trustworthy; certainly a most estimable quality. Another endearing quality of this temperament is simplicity. Every one detests duplicity. But freedom from a propensity to cunning is esteemed universally. Lastly some of the most estimable character traits of this temperament are honesty and sincerity.

Now what is to be observed in the pastoral order regarding this temperament? The dispositions of this temperament are such that very much depends on the proper direction. If the phlegmatic is left to himself he is helpless. He is timid and pusillanimous. He invariably finds its diffi-

cult or even impossible to come to a decision. His vacillating disposition renders him inconstant. Parents can be of great assistance to these characters by imitating the example of Blanche, the saintly mother of St. Louis of France. It is related of her that when little Louis was four or five years of age she would tenderly address him: "My son, you know how very much I love you, but I would rather behold you a corpse than know you had the misfortune of committing a mortal sin." Such instruction will greatly strengthen the will against the allurements of sensuality. Especially when these persons appear silent and taciturn they must be roused. Next, parents must curb their own ambition. They may perceive that a child possesses talent. Naturally, they would willingly give

him a liberal education. But the phlegmatic possesses no ambition. He is not inclined to continue his studies. He shows more aptitude to embrace some honest trade. Let him have his choice and keep him to it. In this case it is best to let him be satisfied with an elementary education only. If he is compelled to continue his studies, he will have no desire to profit by his accomplishments. He will simply give himself to idleness. Whilst, if he had adopted some trade, he would have become a useful member of society. Similar to this is the task of instructors who may have pupils of this temperament. They will find that their charges are easily discouraged at the difficulties in the elementary course. These characters need a firm hand to guide them. But above all mildness must predominate.

Severity is apt to completely discourage such characters. Instructors need an equal amount of patience. It is a most difficult task to be incessantly encouraging them in their studies. The preceptor must esteem his uninterrupted efforts amply rewarded, if such pupils can be induced to make ordinary efforts. The same holds good in the spiritual life in the practice of virtue. The phlegmatic exhibits no enthusiasm to strive after Christian perfection. He abhors mortification. He dislikes constant and generous efforts. This is owing to his inclination to effeminacy. It is absolutely necessary incessantly to arouse him to make efforts to acquire the true love of God. The spiritual director will find the greatest difficulty in deciding whether such subjects have a true vocation for a religious life.

The director must endeavor to instill a great confidence in the assistance of divine grace in such subjects. They can, and will, then make persevering efforts for their own good and that of many others. They will labor quietly and unostentatiously, but still earnestly, to acquire Christian perfection and true love of God.

THE MELANCHOLIC TEMPERAMENT.

IF THERE is a temperament with very unfortunate characteristics, it is certainly the melancholic. Externally this temperament manifests but slight receptibility. Apparently the melancholic seems to remain unmoved. He manifests no emotion. He appears to be very indifferent to the external world, to everything that goes on around him. But, in his imagination he construes an interior world, the ideals of which cannot be realized. He is both slow and obstinate. This obstinancy causes him to be very tenacious of his own opinions. He is never contented. Being a se-

vere censor of morals, he fails to discover anything good in others. Naturally, he is uncongenial. In consequence of this, he exhibits great and constant irritability. It is, therefore, not surprising that he is inclined to be suspicious of others. He is apt to offend others by imagining they have something against him, or are dissatisfied with him, or, perhaps, are opposed to him. He is convinced that he is misjudged. This causes him to be distant and possibly offensive in his intercourse. His fondness for solitude inclines him to singularity. In consequence, he is reserved and wholly engrossed in himself. When offended or in case he imagines an affront has been offered him, he becomes vindictive. He nourishes hatred and aversion. He desires to revenge himself. At the same time

he is capable of bestowing the most ardent friendship on some, individually, to the complete exclusion of all others. He may become a prey to vehement passions. But these he will conceal in his interior. He may secretly indulge in vice. He possesses an unreasonable self-conceit. He fosters within himself an over-estimation of superiority. This readily leads him to despise others. In a word, he may be a votary to extravagant, nay absurd, fanatical, heretical and suicidal ideas, as Rev. Joseph Antonelli, Doctor and Professor, remarks.

The following deserves special mention: The learned Benedictine, Father Schram, distinguishes two varieties of the melancholic temperament. One, he says, is allied to the choleric temperament. It drives men

to fury and insanity. It renders them bold and vindictive. It makes them traitors. Such persons become cruel and prone to every wickedness. If such characters give themselves to contemplation, they yield to obstinate and enduring illusions. They must be quickly recalled from contemplation, lest by their imaginary revelations they infect others with similar insane ideas. The other kind possesses more the traits of the sanguinic temperament. This inclines man to be docile, mild and gentle. The characteristic trait of this temperament is a moderate sadness. It is tranquil in action. It is profound in all undertakings. It possesses weight and maturity in judgment. Father Schram and authors in general admit that every truly great, wise, and prudent man has evinced traits of this tem-

perament. Nay, in advancing years those may attain these characteristics who, in youth were endowed with a choleric temperament. Such persons are well suited to become good advisers, prudent leaders and men of learning. If such become devoted to the spiritual life they are apt to excel and become masters, owing to their prudence and discretion.

This temperament has many good qualities. The first is firmness of purpose. When the melancholic has taken a resolution, difficulties will not swerve him from his purpose. Nay, the greater the obstacles, the more his courage will increase. The greater the difficulties that present themselves, the more arduous become his efforts. At the same time he is prudent and reserved. These qualities prevent him from acting precipi-

tately and imprudently. He acts only after mature deliberation. When he has arrived at a decision, his ardor also is aroused. For this temperament displays energy in a marked degree. If the melancholic gives himself to the pursuit of science he will not rest until he has fathomed the depths of learning. The same holds good in regard to asceticism as Dr. Albert Stöckl (*Lehrbuch der Philosophie*) and other authors remark: The melancholic loves the sublime and terrific. He delights in the supernatural. He loves contemplation. Thus the pursuit and practise of virtue is for him an agreeable task. He will earnestly strive after solid virtue. His ardent mind is easily convinced that God is the only and true Good. He therefore yields himself to the service of God with all the

ardor of which this temperament is capable.

The direction of this temperament must, above all, be considerate and circumspect. The director should combine prudence and consideration in regard to this temperament. He will greatly err if he is abrupt and exacting. In this he must imitate the example of the physician who first endeavors to gain the confidence of his patient before attempting directly to effect a cure. He must exert himself to convince the subject that he has his best interests at heart. Fortunate is the director if he succeeds in this respect. Let him strive to gain the good will of the subject. Then all the difficulties of the melancholic will vanish, both in the pursuit of science and in the practise of virtue. The melan-

cholic will accomplish great things in both respects. He will readily give himself wholly to God with all the ardor proper to this temperament.

On one occasion the Venerable Father Joseph Passerat, C.SS.R., was addressing a number of ecclesiastical students. He made the remark that the devil assails religious persons in particular with the temptation to melancholy. Satan does this to discourage them. He instils a desire to seek pleasure in idle conversations; to see, read and hear all that is going on; to be popular, to enjoy unrestrained freedom. According to St. Paul, "the sorrow of the world worketh death" (2 Cor. vii. 10). In the same verse St. Paul says: "The sorrow that is according to God worketh penance steadfast to salvation." (Ibid.) Holy sadness will cause the

soul to seek solitude in order to converse with God. It keeps the soul in humility by recalling the faults committed and the fund of corruption existing in human nature. (Rev. Louis Brochain, C.SS.R.) This holy sadness will enable all, and in particular the melancholic, to make progress in self-knowledge. The next step is to cling more and more closely to God by true love.

THE SANGUINIC TEMPERAMENT

THE SANGUINIC is the temperament of levity, as Rev. John Ev. Pruner, D.D., remarks (*Lehrbuch der Pastoral Theologie*): The sanguinic abhors labor and exertion. Yet, strange to say, he equally abominates quietude. His characteristic is thoughtlessness. He delights in various, humoring desires and pursuits. But these moods must be fraught with constant change and alteration. He manifests great enthusiasm for truth and goodness and beauty. But this disposition vanishes quickly. He

is as readily moved to tears as to laughter. He is naturally frolicsome. Yet, his gaiety readily degenerates into wantonness. He possesses an unlimited fondness for dissipation, distractions and noisy gatherings. Another trait of this temperament is fickleness. When charged with any duty he is apt to neglect fulfilling it. Or, he may attempt it, but as frequently performs his task only partially. No matter how provoking this may be to others, he is totally unconcerned. Lastly, his resentment is quickly aroused. However, it is not enduring. He is prone to forgive and forget.

There are, nevertheless, several estimable qualities this temperament enjoys. The sanguinic is endowed with a quick perception. He rapidly discerns everything. He is, likewise,

endowed with a vivid imagination. He can rapidly progress in his studies. Unhappily, he is totally averse to continued application. He desires to accomplish everything; but nothing wholly and thoroughly. As a rule, he reflects very little. Consequently, he judges precipitately. Another provoking trait is this: The sanguinic promises much and performs little. He is not a friend of solitude, but delights to mingle in society. He forms friendships quickly, these, however, are not enduring. On the other hand he is much inclined to particular friendships, so called. No one need be surprised that he has favorites and confidants. The great evil resulting therefrom is his proneness to form a clique. This is most disastrous should he happen to be a member of some community.

The inevitable result will be innumerable jealousies, suspicions and parties.

On the other hand the advantageous traits of this temperament are worthy of esteem. No temperament is so well suited as this to make a man a useful member of a community. By nature he is inclined to serve others. It is a pleasure to ask favors of him. He is always ready to give his services. He is forgiving. Though he has been wronged, he is not inclined to harbor an ill will towards the offender. He will quickly forget the wrong done to him. At the same time he is indulgent to the faults of others. He will not judge harshly nor treat his companions with severity. One trait that especially endears him to his associates is his frankness. All that have intercourse with him are charmed by his cheerful dis-

position. Then, too, he is apt to captivate others, because he is a ready speaker. One of the greatest advantages of this temperament is, that, without much difficulty it can accommodate itself to a life of obedience and spirituality.

We will now consider the proper direction of this temperament. The sanguinic stands greatly in need of a kind, but withal firm direction. If directed in accordance with the good characteristics of this temperament the sanguinic is apt to make great and rapid progress in the practise of virtue. The director must strive to induce the sanguinic to conquer his inclination to effeminacy. He must teach him to strive for manliness. He must instruct him to combat his tendency to ease and enjoyment. He must insist that the sanguinic resolutely

combat his proneness to sensibility and various emotions. The sanguinic must be told to embrace mortification energetically. With all his strength and energy he must act against his inborn allurements. He must conquer his aversion to prayer and the reception of the sacraments. For the sanguinic finds it difficult to perform his duties in this regard with fervor and devotion. Owing to his natural vacillation, the sanguinic finds it galling to follow a fixed rule of life. He must, therefore, be held to an orderly and conscientious fulfilment of his prescribed duties. The sanguinic will find it very perplexing to subject himself to unremitting efforts. One day he will be all fervor and resolution. Very quickly, however, he imagines all his strength and determination have vanished. On this

account it is necessary to recommend to him an especial devotion to the Blessed Virgin. Mary is the Mother of Grace. From the very beginning of his spiritual life he should strive to confide in her motherly assistance. He should frequently place his sole reliance in this Help of Christians.

Closely similar must be the guidance of the sanguinic if he applies either to studies or other useful employment. In case he is talented he will be full of courage, as long as he succeeds. When he meets with difficulties or happens to fail, he becomes discouraged. He imagines he ought to take up some other pursuit. If, on the contrary, he is not gifted with talent, it is necessary to encourage him incessantly. He will repeatedly give up every effort and exertion.

THE CHOLERIC TEMPERAMENT.

FIRST, come the traits of this temperament that are more or less dangerous. The choleric temperament is gifted with an energetic mind and an indomitable will. Energy and determination are its characteristic traits. The choleric is also endowed with a fervid imagination. Honor, glory, dominion are his idols. He, so to speak, worships at the altar of fame. By every means possible he endeavors to procure renown for himself. He seeks celebrity by extensively praising his own achievements and accomplishments. His heart's desire is to exer-

cise sway over others. Hence pride is his predominant passion. Again, as a rule, he is too impetuous, altogether too passionate. This renders him fond of strife. He finds great satisfaction in raising quarrels. If he meets with failure in all this he is little contented; he is seldom happy. But, the worst of all happens if the choleric should embrace a career of wickedness. Then he becomes contumacious, brazenfaced and incorrigible. He will prefer death to humiliation. If chastisement is inflicted on him, he will conceal his vices. By no means will he amend.

The good traits of this temperment are very serviceable in many respects. The choleric has an indomitable courage. He is not deterred by obstacles. At the same time he is magnanimous. He is ever

ready to sacrifice his feelings and interests. Other good traits are constancy and fortitude. These enable him to achieve his purpose. If the choleric selects the pursuits of arts and sciences, he is apt to excel. For he will make noble efforts. If he choose a military career he will be a hero in war. However, he is in danger of becoming tyrannical, if invested with authority. Lastly, if he turns to the practises of a virtuous life, he will strive perseveringly for perfection. He will be noted for a profound humility. He will exhibit great constancy in the practises of a penitential life. He will be tireless in the observance of spiritual exercises. His obedience will be prompt. In fact, when his ardor has been inflamed by higher motives, he will be full of zeal for the best interests of

his fellowmen. In a word, in all his undertakings he will be orderly and inciting.

The direction of this temperament must be above all firm and manly. The choleric abhors weakness and indecision. He finds it congenial to be placed under restraint. He is adverse to indulgence. He is opposed to being humored. He loves to be told his dutes unreservedly and decisively. Yet, this must be done calmly and without passion.

COROLLARY

Now, kind reader, you may feel inclined to institute a comparison between these different temperaments. You may ask which of them is preferable. You will perceive the phlegmatic abounds in judgment, or, if you prefer, in intellect. The sanguinic excels in sentiment. The melancholic is greatly influenced by the imagination. The choleric towers over the others in will-power. Yet as R. Kiest (*Die Erziehung im Elternhause*) states, it would be misleading to prefer one temperament to another. Every temperament has its bright side as well as its unfavorable characteristics. Neither may

you assert that any one is led astray by the evil influences of his temperament. He cannot invoke these latter as an excuse for or justification of sin or wrong. For, if any one goes wrong, it is his own fault and want of proper direction. The root lies in the wrong tendency of his own selfishness. Similarly, the advantageous traits of the temperaments are of no moral value. Of themselves, they do not proceed from, nor lead to self-renunciation.

It will, however, be of great advantage to observe the distinguishing and analogous characteristics of these temperaments. These four temperaments form, as it were, two groups. Each group contains two temperaments that have distinguishing, but withal analogous, characteristics. They rest on the same founda-

tion. There is an affinity between them. Thus there is an affinity between the melancholic and sanguinic temperaments. All their tendencies are personal, relate to the individual. The melancholic strives to refer everything to his own use and enjoyment. The sanguinic finds delight, amusement, in everything. These are the receptive temperaments. The choleric and phlegmatic temperaments relate to things external. The choleric endeavors to cultivate, change and ameliorate everything. The phlegmatic is intent on appropriating, putting in order and preserving things. These are the operative or spontaneous characters. These two groups are mutually repellent. Very seldom do they amalgamate. On the contrary, they avoid one another, they shun one another.

They even antagonize one another. Thus you will not meet with choleric-phlegmatic or melancholic-sanguinic. But you will find choleric-melancholic, choleric-sanguinic; as well as phlegmatic-melancholic and phlegmatic-sanguinic characters. The reason is that, in every individual there is found a fundamental temperament. This is circumscribed by another, but less pronounced temperament.

There are some unfortunate characters that have a well-nigh irresistible tendency to a career of crime. These unfortunates have a most violent hankering for lust. This is called the erotic temperament. It may be hereditary. It may be adventitious. In this connection it will suffice to notice the following. Rev. Jos. Aertuys, C.SS.R. *Theologia Pastoralis* (*Temperamenta*), Rev.

Jos. Antonelli, *Medicina Pastoralis* (*Temperamenta*), and Alexander E. Sanford, M.D., Pastoral Medicine (Appendix, Neurasthenia), remark that this temperament requires both a somatic and psychical treatment. These unhappy souls must be placed under the direction of a spiritual adviser as soon as possible.

PART II

CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

THERE are, according to the Rev. Fr. Desurmout, C.SS.R., two methods of striving after perfection. The one, which he calls analytic, consists in the practise of the moral virtues in order to arrive at the love of God. The other is the synthetic. It consists in the practise of the love of God from which will follow all other virtues. The latter is the method of St. Alphonsus, the one he practised himself; the one he ordinarily advocates in his ascetical writings and which he principally develops in his book: "Practise of the Love of Jesus Christ." (Rev.

H. R. Boumaus, C.SS.R., *Seconde Retraite.*)

St. Alphonsus says all the sanctity, all the perfection of a soul, consists in the love of Jesus Christ, our God, our greatest Good and Redeemer. Our Lord says: "For the Father himself loveth you, because you have loved me." (John xvi. 27.) St. Francis de Sales remarks that some place their perfection in works of penance, others in prayer, others again in the frequent reception of the sacraments or in alms-deeds, but they are all mistaken. All perfection consists in loving God with one's whole heart. This explains to us why the Apostle principally admonishes us to charity, calling it the bond of perfection. "But above all those things have charity, which is the bond of perfection." (Col. iii. 14.) For

charity contains and sustains all the virtues that render man perfect. Hence the maxim of St. Augustine: "Love God and do what you will." As soon as a soul loves God, she is inclined to avoid everything displeasing to her amiable Lord and to do all that is pleasing to Him.

"Charity," says St. Bernard, "is something great, something precious." Solomon says of wisdom (which is the same as divine charity) that it is an inexhaustible treasure. "She is an infinite treasure to men! Which they that use become the friends of God." (Wis. vii. 14.) For he that possesses the love of God participates in the friendship of God. St. Thomas teaches that the love of God is the queen of virtues; for where divine charity reigns all other virtues are certain

to follow. They, as it were, form her retinue. She utilizes them all to unite us more intimately to God. Strictly taken, it is charity that unites us to God according to the words of St. Bernard, "Charity is the virtue that unites man to God." Holy Writ also frequently testifies that God loves those that love Him. (Prov. viii. 17.) "I love them that love Me. If anyone loves Me My Father will love him, and we will come to him, and will make our abode with him." (John xiv. 23.) "God is charity, and he that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him." (1 John iv. 16.)

Moreover charity imparts the strength to do and suffer all for God. "For love is strong as death." Nothing, St. Augustine declares, is too difficult, for great charity to

accomplish, for where there is love there is no exertion, or the exertion itself is loved. Let us hear what St. John Chrysostom asserts of the effects of divine charity in a soul. "Where the love of God has taken possession of a soul it enkindles in her an insatiable desire to labor for the object of her love. No matter how many and great things such a soul accomplishes, no matter how much time such a soul may devote to the service of the Lord, she esteems all this as nothing—incessantly she laments she is doing so little for God. And she would deem herself happy were it granted her to die and be entirely consumed for Him. Thus she appears in her own eyes as useless however much she may accomplish. For love teaches her what God deserves. By the medium of that

heavenly light she recognizes how faulty are her actions. She finds but occasion for regret and confusion, because she understands but too well that all she does is very little for so great a Lord."

Oh! did but all men comprehend the great truth. "But one thing is necessary." (Luke x. 42.) It is not necessary to be wealthy, to acquire esteem, to lead a comfortable life, to fill honorable positions and be regarded as learned. The one thing necessary consists in loving God and doing His holy will. For this alone did He create us, and for this alone does He preserve us. In this way alone can we attain our salvation, reach perfection and gain heaven. "Put Me," says the Lord to every soul that wishes to be united to Him and become His spouse, "as a seal

upon thy heart, as a seal upon thy arm." (Canticle viii. 6.) "In order to direct all your actions and desires to Me, upon thy heart that no other love enter there except My love—upon thy arm that in all you do you have no other end than Me." O how quickly will we attain perfection when we have Jesus crucified for our end and seek to please Him alone in all we do!

No one shows better the excellence of the love of God than St. Paul, the great panegyrist of this queen of all virtues in 1 Cor. xiii. 4-7. There he mentions the characteristics of true love and points out the virtues charity produces in the soul. "Charity is patient, is kind: Charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely; is not puffed up, is not ambitious, seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, think-

eth no evil. Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth: Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

THE PERFECTION OF CHARITY CONSISTS IN CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD

All our perfection consists in the love of our infinitely amiable God. But the perfection of charity consists in the conformity of our will with the will of God. For as St. Dionysius the Areopagite teaches (De div. nom. c. 4), the principal effect of love consists therein that, it unites the hearts of the lovers most intimately, to the extent that they have but one will. Thus the more we are one with the will of God, the greater is our love

of God. As hatred holds apart the will among enemies, love unites the will among lovers. Thus St. Jerome writes, "Two persons will love one another truly, when one desires but what the other wills." For this reason the Book of Wisdom says, "They that are faithful in love shall rest in Him." (Wis. iii. 9.) Souls that are attached to God in true love concur in everything He arranges. Accordingly, St. Francis de Sales was right in maintaining that piety consists in the firm will to do everything one knows to be pleasing to God. St. Thomas maintains the same, saying, "Piety consists in the readiness to do all that God demands."

In order that a thing may be good and perfect it must conform to its destiny. Thus a tool is good only, when it is serviceable to the work-

man in his labor. For of what use will it be otherwise? Thus, of what use to a decorator will a brush be that resists his hand, that goes to the left when the delineator wishes it to go to the right, that rises when he wishes it to descend? Would not the artist instantly cast such a brush into the fire? Man is in this world to serve God only and thus glorify Him. This sublime end he can attain only by doing the will of God, the Supreme Lord. If, therefore, man desires to be good and perfect he must spend his life in accomplishing what God wills.

Does a man that follows his own inclinations serve God? Certainly not! Let us take the case of a man that has two servants. The one labors unceasingly all day long but does what is pleasing to himself only.

The other exerts himself less, but is subservient in all things.

Certainly the master will cherish the latter but not the former. The malice of sin consists in willing what God does not will. For sin, according to St. Anselm is, so to speak, an attempt to rob God of His crown. "He that follows his own will," says St. Anselm, "robs, as it were, God of His crown. For as crowns belong to kings only so it belongs to God to carry out His will independently of others." Indeed according to the words of Samuel to Saul it is a species of idolatry to refuse to be directed by God's will. "It is like the crime of idolatry, to refuse to obey." (1 Kings xv. 23.) He is right, for instead of adoring the will of God man worships his own will. In as far as the whole malice of a creature con-

sists in resisting God, thus all his greatness consists in making the will of God his own. According to the prophet Isaias God gives a soul that seeks his good pleasure the name "My Will." "My pleasure in her." (Is. lxii. 4.) This appellation is fully justified for the will of God lives in him that has forsaken his own will. In order to be according to the heart of God, a Christian must accomplish His holy will. "I have found David . . . a man according to my own heart, who shall do all my wills." (Acts xiii. 22.) That great king, as he often attests, was ever ready to fulfil the Word of God. "My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready." (Ps. lvi. 8.) All he desired was that God teach him to accomplish His holy will. "Make the way known

to me, wherein I should walk," (Ps-cxlii. 8), he sighed. O how happy is the man that can always say with the spouse in the Canticles "My soul melted, when he spoke." (Canticle v. 6.) As liquids have no form of their own but take the form of the vessel that contains them, thus the souls that love God have no will of their own but correspond in all things to their beloved; or rather they have a pliable heart that conforms itself to everything that is pleasing to the Lord in opposition to the hard-hearted that resist Him.

How can our works be conducive to the honor of God if they are not accomplished according to His good pleasure? "And Samuel said, Doth the Lord desire holocausts and victims, and not rather that the voice of the Lord should be obeyed?"

(1 Kings xv. 22.) The greatest honor we can bestow on God consists in doing His holy will in all things. This our divine Saviour sought to teach us by example when He came down upon this earth to spread the honor of His heavenly Father among men. Listen! St. Paul makes Him address His eternal Father, "Sacrifice and oblation Thou wouldest not; but a body Thou hast fitted to me. . . . Then said I: "Behold I come to do Thy will O God." (Hebrews x. 5, 9.) That is, "The holocaust offered Thee by men Thou hast rejected. Thou willest that I should sacrifice to Thee the body Thou has given me. Behold I am ready to accomplish Thy will." Our Saviour attested repeatedly that He had come to do the will of His Father. "I came down from heaven,

not to do my own will, but the will of Him that sent me." (St. John vi. 38.) He declares He will look upon him who accomplishes the will of God as a brother. "For whosoever shall do the will of My Father, that is in heaven, he is my brother." (Matt. xii. 50.) The saints had no other object in all they did than to do the will of God according to the example of their divine Master. They knew full well that the perfection of a soul consists therein. Blessed Henry Suso says, " God does not demand that we enjoy many and sublime revelations but that in all things we subject ourselves to the will of God." St. Teresa said: "During meditation we should not seek anything else than to make our will conformable to the will of God, being persuaded that herein consists the

height of perfection. He that excels in this regard will also receive the greatest gifts of grace from God and make the greatest progress in the interior life." (Castles of the Soul II. Chapt. 1.) One day the blessed Dominican Sister Stephanie of Soncino was transported in spirit into heaven. There she saw several souls among the Seraphim she had known on earth. It was revealed to her they had attained this sublime degree of glory because they had practised conformity to the will of God so perfectly on earth.

From the blessed denizens of heaven we must learn how to love God. Their pure and perfect love of our Lord consists in the perfect oneness of their will with His. Should the Seraphim happen to believe it to be God's will that for all

eternity they should heap up the sands on the shores of the oceans or root out the weeds in the gardens, they would do so with the greatest joy. Nay, should God utter the wish that they burn in hell they would instantly plunge themselves into the fiery abyss to comply with His holy will. Therefore our Lord teaches us to pray that we on earth may accomplish the will of God as the Angels are doing in heaven. "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

Since we possess nothing that is so dear to us as our own will the sacrifice of it is the most pleasing offering we can give the Lord. It is also the sacrifice that he most urgently demands, saying: "My son, give me the heart." (Prov. xxiii. 26.) That is to say, thy will. St. Augustine

says we cannot offer God anything more pleasing than when we say: "Take entire possession of us, we give Thee our entire will." He that gives to God his own will gives Him everything. He that offers God his property in bestowing alms, his blood by scourging, his food by fasting gives a part of what he possesses. But he that gives God his own will gives Him everything and can then say: "O Lord, I am poor (have but little to offer) but I will give Thee all I am able to give; after giving up my will nothing more remains to me that I could give."

In order that this sacrifice be perfect it must possess two qualities: it must be entire and constant. Some persons do give their will to God but with a sort of reservation. Such a gift is not very pleasing to God.

Others give God their will but later on take the gift back again. These are in the greatest danger of being abandoned by God. To avert such a misfortune all our efforts, all our desires and prayers ought to be for perseverance that we may never desire aught but what God wills. Let us daily renew our entire abandonment into the hands of God. Let us beware of desiring anything whatever except the good pleasure of God. This will rid us of all passions, concupiscences, fear and disorderly attachments. One act of perfect conformity to the will if God is able to lead us to perfection. Let us look on Saul. When on the point of persecuting the Christians he is enlightened and converted by Jesus Christ. What does Saul do? What does he say? One thing only. He

pledges himself to do the will of God. "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts ix. 6.) Behold, at once the Lord calls him a vessel of election to carry his name before the Gentiles.

Very few Christians understand wherein true piety consists. The majority accommodate it to their inclinations. If they are sad they seek solitude. If they feel drawn to an active life, they devote themselves to works for the zeal of souls. If they feel drawn to a life of severity they practise penance and mortification. If they are inclined to liberality they give alms. Others practise prayer and devotions diligently, and in these things they place their whole sanctity. All these are mistaken. The external works may be the fruit of the love of

God. But the essence of charity is entire conformity with the divine will. On that account it is necessary to renounce oneself and choose what is most pleasing to God from the sole motive that He is deserving of it.

Those that place sanctity in undergoing penances, in receiving Communion frequently, and reciting many vocal prayers, most certainly deceive themselves. Perfection does not consist in these things. According to St. Thomas, perfection consists in subjecting oneself to the will of God. Penances, prayers, communions are good only in as far as God wills them. If they are not according to the will of God instead of taking pleasure in them God will detest and punish them. They are, therefore, means to unite us to the divine will. But, I repeat, all per-

fection, all sanctity, consists in doing what God demands of us. In a word the divine will is the criterion of all that is good and is virtuous. As the will of God is holy it sanctifies everything, even in different works, provided they are performed to please God.

A great servant of God was right in saying, "It is better to resolve to do the will of God than to seek the honor of God." For if we perform His will we also promote His honor. Hence we deceive ourselves if, under the pretext of seeking the honor of God, we follow our own will. From all that has been said it follows clearly that, if we wish to sanctify ourselves we must be wholly intent on doing not our will but the will of God. All the divine commandments and counsels have the purpose that

we do and suffer what God wills and as He wills. Hence all perfection can be summed up in the words, "Do all that God wills, will all that God wills" and this with the sole purpose of pleasing Him. "Is it not therefore true that all can become saints, men and women, young and old, maidens and mothers of families, rich and poor, rulers and subjects, masters and apprentices, merchants and soldiers, business men and officials?" (Rev. A. Hellbach, C.SS.R.)

If we desire to please the heart of God completely we must not be content to conform ourselves to His will, but we must strive, so to speak, to become one with His will. We conform ourselves to the will of God simply by directing our will to the will of God. But we become one with His will when we make but one

will of both, when we will only what God wills. Or if we so totally renounce our own will that the will of God alone remains and becomes ours. This is the height of perfection for which we should strive incessantly. All our actions, desires, meditations and prayers must tend to this. To strive for this more effectually we must ask for the assistance of our patron saints, our angel guardian, of St. Joseph, and above all of the blessed Mother of God. The blessed Virgin Mary is the holiest of creatures, because she most perfectly carried out the will of God.

The pious Dominican Father, John Tauler, relates the following incident that happened to himself. For a number of years he had ardently and fervently prayed God to send him some one that might instruct him in

the truly spiritual life. One day he heard a voice saying, "Go to that church and you will find what you are seeking." The father obeyed. At the door of the church pointed out to him, he met a beggar, barefooted and clothed in rags. He saluted him with the words: "Good day, my friend." "Father," the poor man replied, "I cannot remember ever having had a bad day." "Well," replied the Father, "may God grant you a happy life!" "Thank God!" said the beggar, "I have never been unhappy," adding, "Father, it is not without reason that I say I never had a bad day. For, when I suffer hunger I praise God; when it snows or rains I bless Him; when any one treats me with contempt, repels me or when I have other sufferings I praise the Lord for them. I said I never felt

unhappy and that, also, is true. I am accustomed to will unreservedly all that God wills. Whatever comes upon me, sweet and bitter, I joyfully accept from his hand as best for me. And in this consists my good fortune." "But," said Father Tauler, "should God wish to condemn you to hell what would you say then?" "Should God will that," answered the beggar, "I would, in love and humility, so firmly embrace Our Lord that if He cast me into hell He would necessarily have to follow me. And, then, I would feel happier in hell in His holy embrace than without Him in the enjoyment of all the joys of paradise." "Where did you find God?" "I found Him when I left creatures." "But who are you?" "I am a king." "Where is your kingdom?" "In my heart where all is

kept in strict order; for my passions obey reason and my reason obeys God." Finally Father Tauler asked the beggar how he had attained such perfection. "By keeping silence with men in order to commune with God and by constantly remaining united to God, who is my peace and enjoyment." Thus this poor beggar had attained great perfection; despite poverty he esteemed himself richer than all the princes of the earth; despite suffering he esteemed himself happier than men in the midst of all earthly pleasures.

O my God, I thank Thee for having made the road to perfection so easy. I am determined henceforth, with the assistance of Thy grace, to walk the way of perfection. For this purpose I unite myself unreservedly to Thy will because it is always most

holy, most good, most beautiful, most perfect, most amiable. O will of my God, how dear Thou art to me! I desire to live and die intimately united to Thy will. What is pleasing to Thee will be pleasing to me. Thy desires will also be my desires. O my God, assist me: grant that henceforth I may live to wish that only which Thou desirest and in order to accomplish Thy amiable will. I detest the days on which I did my own will to Thy great displeasure. I love Thee, O will of my God, as much as I love God, because Thou art one with God.

MEANS OF ACQUIRING PERFECTION

The Desire of Perfection

HOLY DESIRES ARE USEFUL AND EVEN NECESSARY

An ardent desire of perfection is the first means that a Christian should adopt in order to acquire sanctity and to consecrate his whole being to God. As the sportsman, to hit a bird in flight, must take aim in advance of his prey, so a Christian, to make progress in virtue, should aspire to the highest degree of holiness which it is in his power to attain. "Who," says holy David, "will give me wings like a

dove, and I will fly and be at rest." (Ps. liv. 7.) Who will give me the wings of the dove to fly to my God, and, divested of all earthly affection, to repose in the bosom of the divinity? Holy desires are the blessed wings with which the saints burst every worldly tie, and fly to the mountain of perfection, where they find that peace which the world cannot give.

But how do fervent desires make the soul fly to God? "They," says St. Laurence Justinian, "supply strength and render pains light and tolerable." (De Disc. mon. c. 6.) On the one hand, good desires give strength and courage, and on the other they diminish the labor and fatigue of ascending the mountain of God. Whosoever, through diffidence of attaining sanctity, does not ar-

dently desire to become a saint, will never arrive at perfection. A man who is desirous of obtaining a valuable treasure which he knows is to be found at the top of a lofty mountain, but who, through fear of fatigue and difficulty, has no desire of ascending, will never advance a single step toward the wished-for object, but will remain below in careless indifference and inactivity. And he who, because the path of virtue appears to him narrow and rugged and difficult to be trodden, does not desire to climb up the mountain of the Lord, and to gain the treasure of perfection, will always continue in a state of tepidity, and will never make the smallest progress in the way of God.

On the contrary, he who does not desire, and does not strenuously endeavor, always to advance in holi-

ness, will, as we learn from experience and from all the masters of the spiritual life, go backward in the path of virtue, and will be exposed to a great danger of eternal misery. "The path of the just," says Solomon, "as a shining light goeth forward and increaseth even to perfect day. The way of the wicked is darksome: they know not when they fall." (Prov. iv. 18, 19.) As light increases constantly from sunrise to full day, so the path of the saints always advances; but the way of the sinners becomes continually more dark and gloomy, till they know not where they go, and at length walk over a precipice. "Not to advance," says St. Augustine, "is to go back." (Ep. 17, E. B.) St. Gregory (Past. p. 3, c. i.) beautifully explains this maxim of spiritual life by comparing a Chris-

tian who seeks to remain stationary in the path of virtue to a man who is on a boat in a rapidly-flowing river, and striving to keep the boat always in the same position. If the boat be not continually propelled against the current, it will be carried away in the opposite direction, and consequently, without continual exertion, its station cannot be maintained. Since the fall of Adam man is naturally inclined to evil from his birth. "For the imagination and thought of man's heart are prone to evil from his youth." (Gen. viii. 21.) If he does not push forward, if he does not endeavor, by incessant efforts, to improve in sanctity, the very current of passion will carry him back. "Since you do not wish to proceed," says St. Bernard, addressing a tepid soul, "you must fail."

"By no means," she replies; "I wish to live and remain in my present state. I will not consent to be worse; and I do not desire to be better." "You, then," rejoins the saint, "wish what is impossible." (Ep. 254.) Because in the way of God, a Christian must either go forward and advance in virtue, or go backward and rush headlong into vice.

In seeking eternal salvation, we must, according to St. Paul, never rest, but must run continually in the way of perfection, that we may win the prize, and secure an incorruptible crown. "So run that you may obtain." (1 Cor. ix. 24.) If we fail, the fault will be ours; for God wills that all be holy and perfect. "This is the will of God—your sanctification." (1 Thess. iv. 3.) He even commands us to be perfect

and holy. "Be you therefore perfect, as also your Heavenly Father is perfect." (Matt. v. 48.) "Be holy because I am holy." (Lev. xi. 44.) He promises and gives, as the holy Council of Trent teaches, abundant strength, for the observance of all His commands, to those who ask it from Him. "God does not command impossibilities; but by His precepts He admonishes you to do what you can, and to ask what you cannot do; and He assists you, that you may be able to do it. (Sess. vi. c. 11.) God does not command impossibilities; but he requires us to do what we can by the aid of his ordinary grace; and when greater helps are necessary, he exhorts us to seek them by humble prayer. He will infallibly attend to our petitions, and enable us to observe all, even the

most difficult, of His commandments. Take courage, then, and adopt the advice of the Venerable Father Torres to a religious, who was one of his penitents: "Let us, my child, put on the wings of strong desires, that, quitting the earth, we may fly to our Spouse and our Beloved, who expects us in the blessed kingdom of eternity."

St. Augustine teaches that the life of a good Christian is one continued longing after perfection. "The whole life," says the saint, "of a good Christian is holy desire." (1 Jo. tr. 4.) He that cherishes not in his heart the desire of sanctity, may be a Christian; but he will not be a good one.

As it is impossible to arrive at perfection in any art or science without ardent desires of its attainment, so

no one has ever yet become a saint, but by strong and fervent aspirations after sanctity. "God," observes St. Teresa, "ordinarily confers his signal favors on those only who thirst after His love." "Blessed," says the Royal Prophet, "is the man whose help is from Thee: in his heart he hath disposed to ascend by steps in the vale of tears. . . . They shall go from virtue to virtue." (Ps. lxxxiii. 6, 7, 8.) Happy the man who has resolved in his soul to mount the ladder of perfection: he shall receive abundant aid from God, and will ascend from virtue to virtue. Such has been the practise of the saints, and especially of St. Andrew Avellino, who even bound himself by vow "to advance continually in the way of Christian perfection." (Offic. 10 Nov.) St. Teresa used to say

that "God rewards, even in this life, every good desire." It was by good desires that the saints arrived in a short time at a sublime degree of sanctity. "Being made perfect in a short space, he fulfilled a long time." (Wis. iv. 13.) It was thus that St. Aloysius, who lived but twenty-five years, acquired such perfection, that St. Mary Magdalene de Pazzi, who saw him in bliss, declared that his glory appeared equal to that of most of the saints. In the vision he said to her: "My eminent sanctity was the fruit of an ardent desire, which I cherished during my life, of loving God as much as He deserves to be loved: and being unable to love Him with that infinite love which He merits, I suffered on earth a continual martyrdom of love, for which I am

now raised to that transcendent glory which I enjoy."

The works of St. Teresa contain, besides those that have been already adduced, many beautiful passages on this subject. "Our thoughts," says the saint, "should be aspiring: from great desires all our good shall come." In another place she says: "We must not lower our desires, but should trust in God, that by continual exertion we shall, by his grace, arrive at sanctity and the felicity of the saints." Again she says: "The divine Majesty takes complacency in generous souls who are diffident in themselves." The great saint asserted that in all her experience she never knew a timid Christian to attain as much virtue in many years as certain courageous souls acquire in a few days. The reading of the lives

of the saints contributes greatly to infuse courage into the soul.

It will be particularly useful to read the lives of those who, after being great sinners, became eminent saints; such as the lives of St. Mary Magdalen, St. Augustine, St. Pelagia, St. Mary of Egypt, and especially of St. Margaret of Cortona, who was for many years in a state of damnation, but even then cherished a desire of sanctity, and who, after her conversion, flew to perfection with such rapidity, that she merited to learn by revelation, even in this life, not only that she was predestined to glory, but also that a place was prepared for her among the seraphim.

St. Teresa says that the devil seeks to persuade us that it would be pride in us to desire a high degree of perfection, or to wish to imitate the

saints. She adds, that it is a great delusion to regard strong desires of sanctity as the offspring of pride; for it is not pride when a soul diffident of herself and trusting only in the power of God, resolves to walk courageously in the way of perfection, saying with the Apostle: "I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me." (Phil. vi. 13.) Of myself I can do nothing; but by His aid I shall be able to do all things, and therefore I resolve, with his grace, to desire to love Him as the saints have loved Him.

It is very profitable frequently to aspire after the most exalted virtue, and to desire it; such as to love God more than all the saints; to suffer for the love of Him more than all the martyrs; to bear and to pardon all injuries; to embrace every sort of fa-

tigue and suffering, for the sake of saving a single soul; and to perform similar acts of perfect charity. Because these holy aspirations and desires, though their object may never be attained, are, in the first place, very meritorious in the sight of God, who glories in men of good will, as He abominates a perverse heart and evil inclinations. Secondly, because the habit of aspiring to heroic sanctity animates and encourages the soul to perform acts of ordinary and easy virtue. Hence, it is of great importance to propose in the morning to labor as much as possible for God during the day; to resolve to bear patiently all crosses and contradictions; to observe constant recollection; and to make continual acts of the love of God. Such was the practise of the seraphic St. Francis. "He pro-

posed," says St. Bonaventure, "with the grace of Jesus Christ, to do great things." St. Teresa asserts that "the Lord is as well pleased with good desires as with their fulfilment." Oh! how much better it is to serve God than to serve the world. To acquire goods of the earth, to procure wealth, honors and applause of men, it is not enough to pant after them with ardor; no, to desire and not to obtain them only renders their absence more painful. But to merit the riches and the favor of God, it is sufficient to desire His grace and love. St. Augustine relates that in a convent of hermits there entered two officers of the emperor's court, one of whom began to read the life of St. Anthony. "He read," says the holy Doctor, "and his heart was stripped of the world." Turning to his com-

panion, he said: "What do we seek? Can we expect from the emperor anything better than his friendship? Through how many dangers are we to reach still greater perils? and how long shall this last? Fools that we have been, shall we still continue to serve the emperor in the midst of so many labors, fears and troubles? We can hope for nothing better than his favor; and should we obtain it, we would only increase the danger of our eternal reprobation. It is only with difficulty that we shall ever procure the patronage of Caesar, but if I will it, behold I am in a moment the friend of God." (Conf. 1. 8, c. 6.) Because whoever wishes with a true and resolute desire for the friendship of God, instantly obtains it.

I say, "with a true and resolute desire," for little profit is derived

from the fruitless desires of slothful souls, who always desire to be saints, but never advance a single step in the way of God. Of them Solomon says: "The sluggard willeth and willeth not." (Prov. xiii. 4.) And again: "Desires kill the slothful." (Ibid. xxi. 25.) The tepid soul desires perfection, but reflecting on the fatigue necessary for its attainment, she desires it not. Thus "she willeth and willeth not." Her desires of sanctity are not efficacious; they have for their object means of salvation incompatible with her state. . . . "I do not," says St. Francis de Sales, "approve of the conduct of those who, while bound by an obligation, or placed in any state, spend their time in wishing for another manner of life, inconsistent with their duties; or for exercises incompatible

with their present state. For these desires dissipate the heart, and make it languish in the necessary exercises." (Introduct. ch. 37.) It is, then, the duty of every Christian to aspire only after that perfection which is suitable to his present state and to his actual obligations; and whether a superior, or a subject, whether in sickness or in health, the vigor of youth or the imbecility of old age, to adopt, resolutely, the means of sanctity suitable to his condition of life. "The devil," says St. Teresa, "sometimes persuades us that we have acquired the virtue, for example, of patience, because we determine to suffer a great deal for God. We feel really convinced that we are ready to accept any cross, however great, for his sake; and this conviction makes us quite content, for

the devil assists us to believe that we are willing to bear all things for God. I advise you not to trust much to such virtue, not to think that you even know it, except in name, until you see it tried. It will probably happen that on the first occasion of contradiction all this patience will fall to the ground."

Moral Necessity of Mental Prayer

Let us now come to what is most important—the means to be adopted for acquiring perfection. The principal means is mental prayer, and particularly the meditation of the claims which God has to our love, and of the love which he has borne us, especially in the great work of redemption. To redeem us,

a God has even sacrificed His life in a sea of sorrows and contempt; and to obtain our love he has gone so far as to make Himself our food. To inflame the soul with the fire of divine love, these truths must be frequently meditated. "In my meditation," says David, "a fire shall flame out." (Ps. xxxviii. 4). When I contemplate the goodness of my God, the flames of charity fill my whole heart.

Let us examine what makes mental prayer so necessary.

1. In the first place, without mental prayer a soul is without light. "They," says St. Augustine, "who keep their eyes shut, cannot see the way of their country."* The eter-

*By insisting on the moral necessity of mental prayer, St. Alphonsus does not demand that every one must follow a certain method. There are many methods and de-

nal truths are all spiritual things that are seen, not with the eyes of the body, but with the eyes of the mind, that is, by reflection and consideration. Now, they who do not make use of mental prayer do not see these truths, nor do they see the importance of eternal salvation, and the means that they must adopt in

grees of mental prayer. There is a method of mental prayer that all can use, viz., calling to mind a sermon; reading from some pious book and stopping between the sentences; then reflecting a moment, applying the reading, etc., to oneself, making short aspirations, asking for pardon, for help of grace and taking an appropriate resolution. By this means many are converted on missions and in retreats. This sort of mental prayer may be said to be necessary for all Christians to obtain conversion and holy perseverance. By reflecting on the disadvantageous traits of one's temperament, as explained above, it will be easy to discover the faults to which one is prone. This reflection will render easy the petitions for one's spiritual wants. To facilitate this sort of mental prayer, the prayers composed by St. Alphonsus were retained in the following chapters.

order to obtain it. The loss of so many souls arises from the neglect of considering the great affair of our salvation, and what we must do in order to be saved. "With desolation," says the prophet Jeremias, "is all the land made desolate: because there is none that considereth in the heart." (Jer. xii. 11.) On the other hand, the Lord says that he who keeps before his eyes the truths of faith, death, judgment, and the happy or unhappy eternity that awaits us, shall never fall into sin. "In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin." (Ecclus. vii. 40.) "Come near to Him," says David, "and you shall be enlightened." (Ps. xxxiii. 6.) In another place our Saviour says "Let your loins be girt, and lamps burning in your hands." (Luke xii. 35.)

These lamps are, according to St. Bonaventure, holy meditations; for in prayer the Lord speaks to us, and enlightens, in order to show us the way of salvation. "Thy word is a lamp to my feet." (Ps. cxviii. 105.)

St. Bonaventure also says that mental prayer is, as it were, a mirror, in which we see all the stains of the soul. In a letter to the Bishop of Osma, St. Teresa says: "Although it appears to us that we have no imperfections, still when God opens the eyes of the soul, as He usually does in prayer, our imperfections are then clearly seen." (Letter viii.) He who does not make mental prayer does not even know his defects, and therefore, as St. Bernard says, he does not abhor them. (De Consid. 1. 1, c. 2.) He does not even know the dangers to which his eternal

salvation is exposed, and therefore he does not even think of avoiding them. But he that applies himself to meditation instantly sees his faults, and the dangers of perdition, and seeing them, he will reflect on the remedies for them. By meditating on eternity, David was excited to the practise of virtue, and to sorrow and works of penance for his sins. "I thought upon the days of old, and I had in my mind the eternal years, . . . and I was exercised, and I swept my spirit." (lxxvi. 6.) The spouse in the Canticles said: "The flowers have appeared in our land: the time of pruning is come: the voice of the turtle is heard in our land." (Cant. ii. 12.) When the soul, like the solitary turtle, retires and recollects itself in meditation to converse with God, then the flowers, that is, good desires

appear; then comes the time of pruning, that is, the correction of faults that are discovered in mental prayer. "Consider," says St. Bernard, "that the time of pruning is at hand, if the time of meditation has gone before." (De Consid. 12, c. 6.) "For," says the saint in another place, "meditation regulates the affections, directs the actions, and corrects defects." (Ibid. 1, 2, c. 7.)

Besides, without meditation there is not strength to resist the temptations of our enemies, and to practise the virtues of the Gospel. "Meditation," says the Venerable Bartholomew of the Martyrs, "is like fire with regard to iron, which when cold is hard, and can be wrought only with difficulty, but placed in the fire it becomes soft, and the workman gives it any form he wishes." To observe the

divine precepts and counsels, it is necessary to have a tender heart, that is, a heart docile and prepared to receive the impressions of celestial inspirations, and ready to obey them. It was this that Solomon asked of God: "Give, therefore, to thy servant an understanding heart." (3 Kings, iii. 9.) Sin has made our heart hard and undocile; for being altogether inclined to sensual pleasures, it resists, as the Apostle complained, the laws of the spirit. "But I see another law in my members fighting against the law of my mind." (Rom. vii. 23.) But the soul is rendered docile and tender to the influence of grace that is communicated in mental prayer. By the contemplation of the divine goodness, the great love which God has borne him, and the immense benefits that God has be-

stowed upon him, man is inflamed with love, his heart is softened, and made obedient to the divine inspirations. But without mental prayer his heart will remain hard and restive and disobedient, and thus he he shall be lost. "A hard heart shall fare evil at the last." (Ecclus. iii. 27.) Hence, St. Bernard exhorted Pope Eugene never to omit meditation on account of external occupations. "I fear for you, O Eugene, lest the multitude of affairs (prayer and consideration being intermitted), may bring you to a hard heart, which abhors not itself, because it perceives not." (Consid. 1. i. c. 2.)

Some may imagine that the long time which devout souls give to prayer, and which they could spend in useful works, is unprofitable and lost time. But such persons know not

that in mental prayer souls acquire strength to conquer enemies and practise virtue. "From the leisure," says St. Bernard, "strength comes forth." Hence the Lord commanded that his spouse should not be disturbed. "I adjure you . . . that you stir not up, nor make the beloved to awake till she please." (Cant. ii. 7.) He says, until she please: for the sleep or repose which the soul takes in mental prayer is perfectly voluntary, but is at the same time necessary for its spiritual life. He who does not sleep, has not strength to work, nor to walk, but goes tottering along the way. The soul that does not repose and acquire strength in meditation is not able to resist temptations, and totters on the road. In the life of the Venerable Sister Mary Crucified we read that while at prayer she heard a

devil boasting that he had made a certain pious soul omit the accustomed meditation, and that afterwards, because he continued to tempt her, she was in danger of consenting to mortal sin. The servant of God ran to her, and with the divine aid rescued her from the criminal suggestion. Behold the danger to which one who omits meditation exposes his soul. St. Teresa used to say that he who neglects mental prayer needs not a devil to carry him to hell, but that he brings himself there with his own hands. And the Abbot Diocles said that "the man who omits mental prayer soon becomes either a beast or a devil."

Without petitions on our part God does not grant the divine helps, and without aid from God we cannot observe the commandments; hence the Apostle exhorted his disciples to

pray always. "Pray without ceasing." Thess. v. 17.) "We are poor mendicants. I am a beggar and poor." (Ps. xxxix. 18.) The entire revenue of the poor consists in asking alms from the rich; and our riches also consist in prayer, that is, in the prayer of petition; for by prayer, says St. John Chrysostom, "we may obtain from God His Graces. Without prayer it is absolutely impossible to lead a good life." (De or D. 1, i.) and, says the learned Monsignor Abelly, "what but the neglect of mental prayer can be the cause of the great relaxation of morals that we witness?" God has an ardent desire to enrich us with his graces, but, as St. Gregory writes, he wishes to be entreated, and, as it were, forced by our prayers to grant them to us. "God," says the holy

Doctor, "wishes to be asked, he wishes to be compelled, he wishes to be overcome by a certain importunity." (In Ps. poenit. 6.) According to St. John Chrysostom, it is impossible for him who attends to prayer to fall into sin. (Ad pop. Ant. hom. 79.) And in another place he says that when the devils see that we pray, they immediately cease to tempt us. (De or D. 50, i.)

From the absolute necessity of the prayer of petition arises the moral necessity of mental prayer; for he who neglects meditation, and is distracted with worldly affairs, will not know his spiritual wants, the dangers to which his salvation is exposed, the means which he must adopt in order to conquer temptations, or even the necessity of the prayer of petition for all men; thus he will give up the

practise of prayer, and by neglecting to ask God's graces, he will certainly be lost. The great Bishop Palafox, in his Annotations to the letters of St. Teresa, says: "How can charity last, unless God gives perseverance? How will the Lord give us perseverance if we neglect to ask Him for it? And how shall we ask it without mental prayer? Without mental prayer, there is not the communication with God which is necessary for the preservation of virtue." And Cardinal Bellarmine says that for him who neglects meditation, it is morally impossible to live without sin. Some one may say, "I do not make mental prayer, but I say vocal prayers." But it is necessary to know, as St. Augustine remarks, that to obtain divine grace it is not enough to pray with the tongue: it is necessary

also to pray with the heart. On the words of David: "I cried to the Lord with my voice." (Ps. cxli. 2) the holy Doctor says: "Many cry not with their own voices (that is, not the interior voice of the soul), but with that of the body." "Your thoughts are a cry to the Lord." (Enarr. in Ps. cxli.) This is what the Apostle inculcates. "Praying at all times in the spirit." (Eph. vi. 18.) "Cry within where God hears." (In Ps. xxx. en. 4.) In general, vocal prayers are said distractedly with the voice of the body, but not of the heart, especially when they are long, and still more especially when said by a person who does not make mental prayer; and therefore God seldom hears them, and seldom grants the graces asked. Many say the Rosary, the Office of the Blessed

Virgin, and perform other works of devotion; but they still continue in sin. It is impossible for him who perseveres in mental prayer to continue in sin; he will either give up meditations or denounce sin. A great servant of God used to say that mental prayer and sin cannot exist together. And this we see by experience: they who make mental prayer rarely incur the enmity of God; and should they ever have the misfortune of falling into sin, by persevering in mental prayer they see their misery, and return to God. "Let a soul," says St. Teresa, "be ever so negligent, if she perseveres in meditation, the Lord will bring her back to the haven of salvation." (Life, ch. 8.)

All the saints have become saints by mental prayer. Mental prayer is the blessed furnace in which souls are

inflamed with divine love. "In my meditation," says David, "a fire shall flame out." (Ps. xxxviii. 4.) St. Vincent of Paul used to say, that it would be a miracle if a sinner who attends at the sermons in the mission, or in the spiritual exercises, were not converted. Now, he who preaches and speaks in the exercises is only a man; but it is God himself that speaks to the soul in meditation. "I will lead her into the wilderness; and I will speak to her heart." (Osee ii. 14.) St. Catherine of Bologna used to say: "He who does not practise mental prayer deprives himself of the bond that unites the soul to God; hence, finding her alone, the devil will easily make her his own." "How," she would say, "can I conceive that the love of God is found in the soul

that cares but little to treat with God in prayer?"

Where but in meditation have the saints been inflamed with divine love? By means of mental prayer St. Peter of Alcantara was inflamed to such a degree that in order to cool himself he ran into a frozen pool, and the frozen water began to boil like water in a caldron placed on a fire. In mental prayer St. Philip Neri became inflamed, and trembled so that he shook the entire room. In mental prayer St. Aloysius Gonzaga was so inflamed with divine ardor that his very face appeared to be on fire, and his heart beat as strongly as if it wished to fly from the body.

St. Laurence Justinian says: "By the efficacy of mental prayer temptation is banished, sadness is driven

away, lost virtue is restored, fervor which has grown cold is excited, and the lovely flame of love is augmented." Hence, St. Aloysius Gonzaga has justly said that he who does not make much mental prayer will never attain a high degree of perfection.

"A man of prayer," says David, "is like a tree planted near the current of waters, which brings forth fruit in due time; all his actions prosper before God. Blessed is the man . . . who shall meditate on his law day and night! And he shall be like a tree which is planted near the running waters, which shall bring forth its fruit in due season, and his leaf shall not fall off: and all, whatsoever he shall do, shall prosper." (Ps. i. 1–3.) Mark the words, in due season; that is, at the time when he

ought to bear such a pain, such an affront, etc.

St. John Chrysostom compared mental prayer to a fountain in the middle of a garden. Oh! what an abundance of flowers and verdant plants do we see in the garden which is always refreshed with water from the fountain. Such, precisely, is the soul that practises mental prayer; you will see that she always advances in good desires, and that she always brings forth more abundant fruits of virtue. Whence does she receive so many blessings? From meditation, by which she is continually irrigated. Thy plants are a paradise of pomegranates with the fruits of the orchard, . . . the fountain of gardens, the well of living waters, which run with a strong stream from Libanus." (Cant. 4, 13.) But let the

fountain cease to water the garden, and, behold, the flowers, plants, and all instantly wither away; and why? Because the water has failed. You will see that as long as a soul makes mental prayer she is modest, humble, devout, and mortified in all things. But let her omit meditation, you will instantly find her wanting in modesty of the eyes, proud, resenting every word, indevout, no longer frequenting the sacraments and the church; you will find her attached to vanity, to useless conversations, to pastimes, and to earthly pleasures; and why? The water has failed, and therefore fervor has ceased. "My soul is as earth without water unto thee . . . My spirit hath fainted away." (Ps. cxlii. 6, 7.) The soul has neglected mental prayer, the garden is therefore dried up, and the miserable soul

goes from bad to worse. When a soul abandons meditation St. John Chrysostom regards it not only as sick, but as dead. "He," says the holy Doctor, "who prays not to God, nor desires to enjoy assiduously his divine conversation, is dead. . . . The death of the soul is not to be prostrated before God." (D. 1. i.)

The same Father says that mental prayer is the root of the fruitful vine. (D. 1, i.) And St. John Climacus writes that prayer is "a bulwark against the assault of afflictions, the spring of virtues, the procurer of graces." (Scal. par. gr. 23). Rufinus asserts that all the spiritual progress of the soul flows from mental prayer. (Ps. xxxvi.) And Gerson goes so far as to say, that "he who neglects meditation cannot, with-

out a miracle, lead the life of a Christian." (Med. cons. 7.)

Speaking of mental prayer, Jeremias says: "He shall sit solitary, and hold his peace; because he hath taken it up upon himself." (Lam. iii. 28.) That is, a soul cannot have a relish for God, unless it withdraws from creatures, and sits, that is stops, to contemplate the goodness, the love, the amiableness of God. But when solitary and recollected in meditation, that is, when it takes away its thoughts from the world, it is then raised above itself, and departs from prayer very different from what it was when it began it.

St. Ignatius of Loyola used to say that mental prayer is the short way to attain perfection. In a word, he who advances most in meditation makes the most progress in per-

fection. In mental prayer the soul is filled with holy thoughts, with holy affections, desires, and holy resolutions, and with love for God. There man sacrifices his passions, his appetites, his earthly attachments, and all the interests of self-love. Moreover, by praying for them in mental prayer we can save many sinners, as was done by St. Teresa, St. Mary Magdalene de Pazzi, and is done by all souls enamoured of God, who never omit in their meditations to recommend to him all infidels, heretics and all poor sinners; begging him also to give zeal to priests who work in his vineyard, that they may convert his enemies. In mental prayer we can also, by the sole desire of performing them, gain merit of many good works which we do not perform. For as the Lord punishes

the bad desires, so, on the other hand, he rewards all our good desires.

It is necessary, above all, to be careful not to go to mental prayer in order to enjoy consolation and tenderness, but for the purpose of pleasing God, and of learning from him how he wishes to be loved and served by us. Father Balthazar Alvarez used to say: "The love of God consists not in receiving his favors, but in serving him through the sole motive of pleasing him. And he would say that divine consolation is like the refreshment that we take on a journey not to rest in it, but in order to go forward with greater vigor. When you feel aridity in meditation, be careful to persevere, in spite of all the tediousness that you experience, and know then that you give

great pleasure to your Spouse and acquire great merits. Say to Him then: "O my Jesus, why dost Thou treat me thus? Thou hast stripped me of all things, of property, of relatives, of my will, and I have been satisfied with all these privations, in order to gain Thee; but why dost Thou now deprive me also of Thyself?" Say this to Him with an humble affection; He will make thee feel that he does all because He loves thee, and for thy greater good. Father Torres used to say: "To carry the cross with Jesus without consolation, makes the soul run and fly to perfection."

PRAYER

My Jesus, Thou hast loved me in the midst of pains; and in the midst

of sufferings I wish to love Thee. Thou hast spared nothing: Thou hast even given Thy blood and Thy life in order to gain my love; and shall I continue as hitherto, to be reserved in loving Thee? No, my Redeemer, it shall not be so; the ingratitude with which I have hitherto treated Thee is sufficient. To Thee I consecrate my whole heart. Thou alone dost deserve all my love. Thee alone do I wish to love. My God, since Thou wishest me to be entirely Thine, give me strength to serve Thee as Thou deservest, during the remainder of my life. Pardon my tepidity and my past infidelities. How often have I omitted mental prayer in order to indulge my caprice. Alas! how often, when it was in my power to remain with Thee in order to please Thee, have I re-

mained with creatures so as to offend Thee. Oh! that so many lost years would return! But, since they will not return, the remaining days of my life must be entirely Thine, O my beloved Lord. I love Thee, O my Jesus! I love Thee, O my Sovereign Good! Thou art, and shalt be forever, the only love of my soul.

O Mother of fair love, O Mary, obtain for me the grace to love thy Son, and to spend the remainder of my life in His love. Thou dost obtain from Jesus whatsoever thou wishest; through thy prayers I hope for this gift.

The Practise of Mental Prayer

Having seen the great necessity of mental prayer for Christians, and the great blessings that they may draw from it, let us now consider the practise of meditation, with regard to the place, and the manner.

1. THE PLACE SUITABLE FOR MENTAL PRAYER

With regard to the place, it should be solitary. "But," said our Saviour, "when thou shalt pray, enter into thy chamber, and having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret." (Matt. vi. 6.). When you wish to pray, shut yourself up in your chamber, and thus pray to your Father. St. Bernard says that silence and

the absence of all noise almost force the soul to think of the goods of heaven. (Epist. 78.).

To make mental prayer, the best place is, as has been said, your own room; but for Religious the most appropiate place is the church, in presence of the Blessed Sacrament. The Venerable Father Avila used to say that he knew no sanctuary more desirable than a church in which Jesus Christ remains in the Holy Eucharist.

In order to make mental prayer well, it is necessary to unite to the external silence interior silence, that is, detachment from earthly affections. Speaking of certain persons attached to the world, our Lord said one day to St. Teresa: "I would wish to speak to them, but creatures make such a noise in their ears that they do

not give me a moment in which I can make them listen to me."

2. THE TIME OF MAKING MENTAL PRAYER

1. With regard to the time of making mental prayer, St. Isidore used to say, that, ordinarily speaking, the fittest time for meditation is the morning and evening. (Spec. disc. p. i, c. 12.) But according to St. Gregory of Nyssa, the morning is the most seasonable time for prayer; because, says the saint, when prayer precedes business, sin will not gain admission to the soul. (De Or. Dom. or. I.) The Venerable Father Charles Carafa, founder of the Congregation of the Pious Workers, used to say that a fervent act of love made in the morning during meditation is sufficient to

maintain the soul in fervor during the entire day. Prayer, as St. Jerome has written, is also necessary in the evening. (Ad. Eustoch.) Let not the body go to rest before the soul is refreshed by mental prayer, which is the food of the soul. But at all times and in all places pious souls can pray, even at work, or at recreation; it is enough for them to raise the mind to God and to make good acts, for in this consists mental prayer.

2. With regard to the time to be spent in mental prayer, the rule of the saints was, to devote to it all the hours that were not necessary for the occupations of human life. St. Francis Borgia employed eight hours in the day in meditation, because his Superiors would not allow him a longer time, and when the eight hours were expired, he earnestly asked per-

mission to remain a little longer at prayer, saying, "Ah! give me another little quarter of an hour." St. Philip Neri was accustomed to spend the entire night in prayer. St. Anthony the Abbot remained the whole night at prayer, and when the sun appeared, which was the time assigned for terminating his prayer, he complained of it for having risen too soon. Father Balthazar Alvarez used to say that a soul that loves God, when not in prayer, is like a stone out of its centre, in a violent state; for in this life we should as much as possible imitate the life of the saints in bliss, who are constantly employed in the contemplation of God.

It is right to observe, that with regard to the posture the fittest one is kneeling; but when it causes pain and distraction, a person may, as St. John

of the Cross says, make meditation sitting in a modest posture.

3. THE MANNER OF MAKING MENTAL PRAYER

As to the manner of making mental prayer, I will suppose that you are already instructed in it; but allow me to explain briefly the principal parts of mental prayer for any beginner into whose hands this book may fall.

Mental prayer contains three parts: the preparation, the meditation, and the conclusion.

In the preparation there are three acts: an act of faith, of the presence of God, and of adoration; an act of humility and sorrow for our sins, and a petition for light. They may be made in the following manner: My God, I believe Thee present within

me; I adore Thee with my whole soul.

Be careful to make this act with a lively faith, for a lively remembrance of the Divine Presence contributes greatly to remove distractions. Cardinal Carracciolo, Bishop of Aversa, used to say that when a person is distracted in meditation there is reason to think that he has not made a lively act of faith.

Lord, I should now be in hell in punishment of the offences I have offered to Thee. I am sorry for them from the bottom of my heart; have mercy on me.

Eternal Father, for the sake of Jesus and Mary, give me light in this meditation, that I may draw fruit from it.

We must, then, recommend ourselves to the Blessed Virgin by saying

a Hail Mary, to St. Joseph, to our guardian angel, and to our holy patron.

These acts, according to St. Francis de Sales, ought to be made with fervor, but should be short, that we may pass immediately to the meditation.

On entering on the meditation we must take leave of all extraneous thoughts, saying with St. Bernard, "O my thoughts! wait here; (De cont. D. c. 1.) after prayer we shall speak on other matters." Be careful not to allow the mind to wander where it wishes; but should a distracting thought enter, we must not be disturbed, nor seek to banish it with a violent effort, but let us remove it calmly and return to God. Let us remember that the devil labors hard to disturb us in the time of meditation

in order to make us abandon it. Let him, then, who omits mental prayer on account of distractions be persuaded that he gives delight to the devil. "It is impossible," says Cassian, "that our minds should be free from all distractions during prayer." (Collat. 23, c. 7). Let us, then, never give up meditation, however great our distraction may be. St. Francis de Sales (Letter 629) says that if in mental prayer we should do nothing else than continually banish distractions and temptations, the meditation is well made. And before him St. Thomas taught that involuntary distractions do not take away the fruit of mental prayer. (2. 2, q. 83, a. 13.) When we perceive that we are deliberately distracted, let us desist from the voluntary defect, and banish the distraction, but let us be

careful not to discontinue our meditation.

With regard to the subject-matter of meditation, the best rule is to meditate on the truths or mysteries in which the soul finds most nourishment and devotion. But above all, for a soul that loves perfection the most appropriate subject is the Passion of Jesus Christ. Blosius writes that our Lord revealed to several holy women, St. Gertrude, St. Bridget, St. Mechtilde, and St. Catherine of Siena that they who meditate on his Passion are very dear to him. According to St. Francis de Sales, (Introd. p. 2, ch. i.) the passion of our Redeemer should be the ordinary subject of the meditations of every Christian. Oh what an excellent book is the Passion of Jesus! There we understand better than in any other

book the malice of sin, and also the mercy and love of God for man. To me it appears that Jesus Christ has suffered so many different pains, the scourging, the crowning with thorns, the crucifixion, etc., that having before our eyes so many painful mysteries we might have a variety of different subjects for meditating on His passion, by which we might excite sentiment of gratitude and love.

When she is alone at meditation a soul will do well always to make mental prayer with the aid of a book. St. Teresa used a book for seventeen years: she would first read a little, and then meditate for a short time on what she had read. It is useful to meditate in this manner, in imitation of a pigeon, that first drinks and then raises its eyes to heaven.

However, let it be remembered

that the advantage of mental prayer consists not so much in meditating as in making affections, petitions and resolutions: these are the three principal fruits of meditation. "The progress of a soul," says St. Teresa, "does not consist of thinking much of God, but in loving Him ardently; and this love is acquired by resolving to do a great deal for Him." (Found. ch. 5.) Speaking of mental prayer, the spiritual masters say that meditation is, as it were, the needle which when it has passed must be succeeded by the golden thread composed, as has been said, of affections, resolutions, and petitions.

When you have reflected on the point of meditation, and feel any pious sentiment, raise your heart to God and offer Him acts of humility, of confidence, or of thanksgiving;

but above all, repeat in mental prayer acts of contrition and of love.

The act of love, as also of contrition, is the golden chain that binds the soul to God. An act of perfect charity is sufficient for the remission of all our sins. "Charity covereth a multitude of sins." (1 Pet. iv. 8.) The Lord has declared that He cannot hate the soul that loves Him: "I love them that love me." (Prov. viii. 17.) The Venerable Sister Mary Crucified once saw a globe of fire in which some straws that had been thrown into it were instantly consumed. By this vision she was given to understand that a soul by making a true act of love obtains the remission of all its faults. Besides, the Angelic Doctor teaches that by every act of love we acquire a new degree of glory. "Every act of

charity," says the saint, "merits eternal life." (1. 2. q. 114, a. 7.) Acts of love may be made in the following manner:

My God, I esteem Thee more than all things.

I love Thee with my whole heart. I delight in Thy felicity.

I would wish to see Thee loved by all.

I wish only what Thou wishest.

Make known to me what Thou wishest from me, and I will do it.

Dispose as Thou pleasest of me and of all that I possess.

This last act of oblation is particularly pleasing to God. St. Teresa was accustomed to offer herself to God in this manner at least fifty times day.

Remember in this chapter we speak of the ordinary mental prayer;

for should a soul feel itself at any time united to God by supernatural or infused recollection, without any particular thought of an eternal truth or of any divine mystery, it should not labor then to perform any other acts than those to which it feels itself sweetly drawn to God. It is then enough to endeavor with loving attention to remain united with God without impeding the divine operation, or forcing oneself to make reflections and acts. But this is to be understood when the Lord calls the soul to this supernatural prayer; but until we receive such a call we should not depart from the ordinary method of mental prayer, but should, as it has been said, make use of meditations and affections. However, for persons accustomed to mental prayer it is better to apply

themselves in affections than in considerations.

Moreover, in mental prayer it is very profitable, and perhaps more useful than any other act, to repeat petitions to God, asking with humility and confidence his graces; that is, his light, resignation, perseverance, and the like; but above all, the gift of his holy love. St. Francis de Sales used to say, that by obtaining the divine love we obtain all graces; for a soul that truly loves God with its whole heart will of itself, without being admonished by others, abstain from giving him the smallest displeasure, and will labor to please him to the best of its ability.

When you find yourself in aridity and darkness, so that you feel, as it were, incapable of making good acts, it is sufficient to say: "My Jesus,

mercy. Lord, for the sake of Thy mercy, assist me." And the meditation made in this manner will be for you, perhaps, the most useful and fruitful.

The Venerable Paul Segneri used to say that until he studied theology he employed himself during the time of mental prayer in making reflections and affections; but "God" (these are his own words) "afterwards opened my eyes, and thenceforward I endeavored to employ myself in petitions, and if there is any good in me, I ascribe it to the exercise of recommending myself to God." Do you likewise do the same; ask of God his graces in the name of Jesus Christ, and you shall obtain whatsoever you desire. This our Saviour has promised, and his promise cannot fail: "Amen, amen, I say

to you, if you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it you." (John, xvi. 23.)

In a word, all mental prayer should consist in acts and petitions. Hence the Venerable Sister Mary Crucified, while in an ecstasy, declared that mental prayer is the respiration of the soul; for as by respiration the air is first attracted and afterward given back, so by petitions the soul first receives grace from God, and then by good acts of oblation and love it gives itself to him.

In finishing the meditation it is necessary to make a particular resolution; as, for example, to avoid some particular defect into which you have more frequently fallen, or to practise some virtue, such as to suffer the annoyance that you receive from

a fellowman, to obey more exactly a certain superior, to perform some particular act of mortification. We must repeat the same resolution several times until we find that we have got rid of the defect or acquired the virtue. Afterwards reduce to practise the resolutions you have made as soon as an occasion presents itself.

The conclusion of meditation consists of three acts: 1. In thanking God for the lights received; 2. In making a purpose to fulfil the resolutions made; 3. In asking of the eternal Father for the sake of Jesus and Mary grace to be faithful to them.

Be careful never to omit at the end of meditation to recommend to God the souls in Purgatory and poor sinners. St. John Chrysostom says

that nothing more clearly shows the love of a soul for Jesus Christ than her zeal in recommending her brethren to him. (Contra Anom. hom. 6.)

St. Francis de Sales remarks that in leaving mental prayer we should take with us a nosegay of flowers, in order to smell them during the day; that is, we should remember one or two points in which we felt particular devotion in order to excite our fervor during the day.

The ejaculations that are dearest to God are those of love, of resignation, of oblation of ourselves. Let us endeavor not to perform any action without first offering it to God, and not to allow at the most a quarter of an hour to pass, in whatever occupations we may find ourselves, without raising the heart to the Lord by

some good act. Moreover, in our leisure time, such as when we are waiting for a person, or when we walk in the garden, or are confined to bed by sickness, let us endeavor to the best of our ability to unite ourselves to God. It is also necessary by observing silence, by seeking solitude as much as possible, and by remembering the presence of God, to preserve the pious sentiments conceived in meditation.

I here add, that in order to be a soul of prayer, a Christian must resist with fortitude all temptations to discontinue mental prayer in the time of aridity. St. Teresa has left us very excellent instructions on this point. In one place she says: "I hold for certain that the Lord will conduct to the haven of salvation the soul that perseveres in mental prayer, in spite

of all the sins that the devil may oppose." (Life, ch. 8.) In another place she says: "The devil knows that he has lost the soul that perseveringly practises mental prayer." (Life, ch. 19.) Again she says: "He that does not stop in the way of mental prayer, reaches the end of his journey, though he should delay a little." (Life, ch. 19.) "The love of God does not consist in experiencing tender affections, but in serving him with courage and humility." (Life, ch. 11.)

Finally she concludes, saying: "By aridity and temptations the Lord proves his lovers. Though aridity should last for life, let not the soul give up prayer: the time will come when all will be well rewarded." (Life, ch. 11.)

The Angelic Doctor says that true devotion consists not in feeling, but in the desire and resolution to embrace promptly all that God wills. (2. 2. q. 82. a. i.) Such was the prayer that Jesus Christ made in the garden; it was all full of aridity and tediousness, but it was the most devout and meritorious prayer that had ever been offered in this world: it consisted of these words: "Not what I will, but what thou wilt." (Mark, xiv, 36.)

Dear Christian, never give up mental prayer in the time of aridity. Should the tediousness that assails you be very great, divide your meditations into several parts, and employ yourself for the most part in petitions to God, even though you should seem to pray without confidence and without fruit. It will be sufficient to say and repeat: "My Jesus, mercy."

"Lord, have mercy on me." Pray, and doubt not that God will hear you and grant your petitions.

And in going to meditation, never propose to yourself, your own pleasure and satisfaction, but only to please God, and to learn what he wishes you to do. And for this purpose pray always that God may make known to you his will, and that he may give you strength to fulfil it. All that we ought to seek in mental prayer is light to know and strength to accomplish the will of God in our regard.

PRAYER

Ah! my Jesus, it appears that Thou couldst do nothing more, in order to gain the love of men. It is enough to know that Thou hast wished to become man; that is, to become like us,

a worm. Thou hast wished to lead a painful life, of thirty-three years, amid sorrow and ignominies, and in the end to die on an infamous gibbet. Thou hast also wished to remain under the appearance of bread, in order to become the food of our souls; and how is it possible that Thou hast received so much ingratitude, even from Christians that believe these truths and still love Thee so little? Unhappy me! I have hitherto been among those ungrateful souls; I have attended only to my pleasures, and have been forgetful of Thee and of Thy love. I now know the evil I have done; but I repent of it with my whole heart; my Jesus, pardon me. I now love Thee; I love Thee so ardently that I choose death, and a thousand deaths, rather than cease to love Thee. I thank

Thee for the light that Thou hast given me. Give me strength, O God of my soul, always to advance in Thy love. Accept this poor heart to love Thee. It is true that it has once despised Thee, but now it is enamoured of Thy goodness; it loves Thee and desires only to love Thee.

O Mary, Mother of God, assist me; in thy intercession I place great confidence.

CONCLUSION

Rev. Gerard Tillamann, C.SS.R., in his book, *Das Gebet,* Vol. II, speaks of different methods of meditation. He has a number of chapters on the methods of meditation of the Fathers of the Desert, of St. Bonaventure, St. Peter of Alcantara, St. Ignatius and St. Francis de Sales. Of the above method of St. Alphonsus he says it is the easiest and simplest. The distinctive mark of the method of St. Alphonsus is that the Saint insists in a most especial manner on making frequent and fervent acts of petition. The Saint

regards this as the most important and useful part. Ven. Fr. Passerat, C.SS.R., said on one occasion, "You complain you cannot meditate. Well, then, propound to yourself these four questions: What did I read? What conclusion must I draw? What have I done hitherto? What must I do in future? Strive to answer these questions the best way you can and you will have made an excellent meditation." From all this it becomes clear that in meditation we employ the three faculties of the soul. The memory recalls the subject of consideration. The intellect thinks the matter over. The will utilizes it for acts of faith, charity, humility and petition, etc.

In connection herewith it may be remarked that many complain of the difficulty of remaining recollected.

The distractions that assail us are incessant. What is the remedy? Endeavor to have some method or rule to guide you. For instance make an act of contrition, a spiritual communion and a short salutation to Our Lady every quarter of an hour. The latter also may be short, as: Sweet Heart of Mary, be my salvation. Every act of true sorrow is according to St. Thomas an act of love. (Fr. Boumanns, (C.SS.R.)

Salve Regina

Hail, holy Queen, mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness and our hope, hail! To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve; to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears! Turn then, most gracious advocate, thine

eyes of mercy toward us, and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb Jesus. O clement, O merciful, O sweet Virgin Mary.

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